

Dictionary of Australian and New Guinean Mammals

by Ronald Strahan and Pamela Conder

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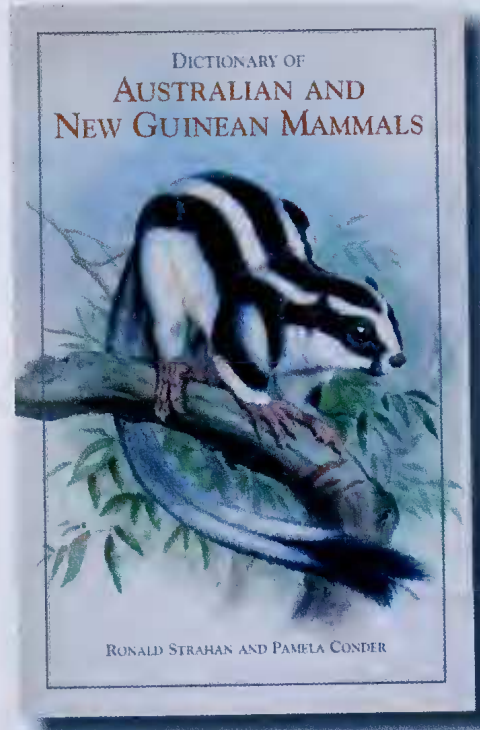
This book is the successor to *A Dictionary of Australian Mammal Names* published in 1981. The authors have updated the 1981 dictionary to include New Guinean species in one of the first attempts to provide a unified treatment of Melanesian and Australian mammalian faunas.

The book deals with a number of taxonomic aspects of Australian and New Guinean species, including the current scientific name and pronunciation, derivation and meaning of the name, common name, and the describer and reference for the first published description. These details are infrequently provided in field guides or other reference books.

The introduction provides an overview of the history of discovery and naming of mammals in Australia and Melanesia, and the publications on taxonomic aspects. The dictionary itself is comprehensive and ordered alphabetically by genus and species. An index of common names at the back allows the reader to easily locate the species in the dictionary. There are numerous illustrations of species reprinted from historical accounts. These are interesting by themselves. The authors have done an excellent job of describing concisely how each species was named.

Perhaps the most interesting and often amusing reading in this book is the collection of biographies of 51 workers who have described Australian and New Guinean mammals during the last three centuries. Amongst the biographies are those of Frenchman Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire (1772–1844) who coined the term Monotremata; John Gould (1804–1881) who began his career as a gardener, but went on (with no formal training) to become a well-known zoologist; and more recently John Calaby (1922–1998) who has around thirty species named after him; and Tim Flannery (1956–) who authored the books *Mammals of New Guinea* and *Mammals of the South-West Pacific and Moluccan Islands*.

The authors have a reputation for producing quality books. Ronald Strahan is a well-known



authority in the field of Australian mammalogy, and Editor of the widely used reference *The Mammals of Australia*. Pamela Conder is a natural history author and artist who previously worked with Strahan to produce *The Incomplete Book of Australian Mammals*, a lighter account of the study of Australian mammals.

This book should not be mistaken for a field guide as it does not provide any accounts of species or their distribution. It is, however, a valuable reference for those interested in the taxonomy and natural history of Australian and New Guinean mammals.

Desley Whisson
School of Life and Environmental Sciences
Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway
Burwood, Victoria 3125